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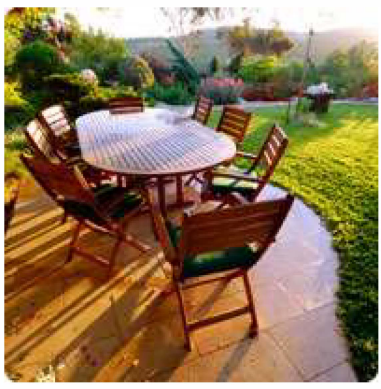
Our summer forecast

31 July 2009



The media spotlight has been on our summer forecast in the last week and here we clarify some of the misconceptions about the recent routine update to our forecast for this summer.

An important point to get across is that, even though our forecast is for rainfall to be near or above average in August there is still the possibility of some spells of fine weather at times through the month.

We acknowledge that the weather we have seen through July has been disappointing, especially after the fine weather through June and the heatwave at the end of June and beginning of July.

In April our seasonal forecast for the summer (June, July and August) stated that there was a 65% probability of a warmer-than-average and near- or drier-than-average summer. Our news release stated: “The coming summer is ‘odds on for a barbecue summer’...

“Although the forecast is for a drier and warmer summer than average it does not rule out the chances of seeing some heavy downpours at times. However, a repeat of the wet summers of 2007 and 2008 is unlikely.”

At no time did the Met Office state that Summer 2009 would be hot and dry throughout or forecast a ‘scorcher’.

Some facts:

- Since the start of the school holidays we have seen above-average rainfall in some areas and temperatures generally above average.
- Many areas of the UK had a heatwave at the end of June.
- The hottest temperatures since the record-breaking month of July 2006, have already been recorded this summer. Many locations reached or exceeded 30 °C, with Wisley, Surrey recording the highest temperature of 31.8 °C.
- The first half of this summer has not been as wet as 2007 and 2008. June had 87% of the average rainfall.
- The Wimbledon tennis championships were virtually rain-free, providing the best weather at the tournament since 1995. The Glastonbury Festival was also mostly dry, the Ashes Test Matches and the Open golf all saw largely dry and sunny conditions.
- July, so far, has seen warmer-than-average temperatures and above-average rainfall in some areas.

Long-term mean temperature comparisons for the UK summer so far

Month	Long-term average	2009
June	12.6 °C	13.6 °C
July (up to 27th)	14.9 °C	15.3 °C
Season so far	13.7 °C	14.4 °C

Long-term average rainfall comparisons for the UK summer

Month	Long-term average	2009
June	72.6 mm	63.4 mm
July (up to 27th)	69.6 mm	121.3 mm
Season so far	142.5 mm	184.7 mm

Seasonal forecasting is a developing area of meteorology and, although these forecasts are nowhere near as accurate as our short-term forecasts, they do demonstrate some skill in predicting what may happen for a season ahead — if they are looked at over a number of years.

It is important that the Met Office, as well as others developing seasonal forecasting methods, do not stand still and continue to drive forward developments in seasonal forecasting and climate change. We have seen vast improvements in our short-range forecasting over the last 50 years due to our continuing research programme and we are confident that we will continue to see improvements in our seasonal forecasts as well.

Latest weather